

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 419

By Massey

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize The Chuck Wagon Gang on its illustrious and amazing eighty-year career in the field of gospel music.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly pay tribute to those gifted singers and musicians who have withstood the capricious trends of popular culture to succeed and endure as gospel music performers of the greatest artistry; and

WHEREAS, over the past eighty years, the original and present members of The Chuck Wagon Gang have distinguished themselves as talented country gospel artists who have inspired and entertained multiple generations with their close harmony style; and

WHEREAS, the origins of The Chuck Wagon Gang date back to 1935 in Lubbock, Texas, where David Parker Carter and his wife, Carrie, were itinerant sharecroppers with nine children; and

WHEREAS, the Carters were a musical family with a marginal existence, so patriarch Dave Carter decided to audition part of his clan for a fifteen-minute program on radio station KFYO; the quartet, which then consisted of David "Dad" Carter (baritone), Jim Carter (bass), Rose Carter (soprano), and Anna Carter (alto), greatly impressed the station's management, and the group was hired on the spot; and

WHEREAS, Dad and Carrie grew up in the shape-note, singing-school tradition and subsequently taught their children to sing in four-part harmony; the use of a female lead vocal was unusual during this time, and thus the group's most distinctive feature was Rose's lead soprano, closely supported by Anna's alto; and

WHEREAS, although their early repertoire included many types of songs, their gospel tunes, which prominently featured four-part harmony, were especially popular with their listening audience; and

WHEREAS, within a year, the quartet's overwhelming popularity propelled them to WBAP in Fort Worth, Texas, one of the most powerful radio stations in the state, and rebirth as "The Chuck Wagon Gang," a name that has become legendary in the gospel music industry; and

WHEREAS, by the late 1930s, The Chuck Wagon Gang devoted its radio broadcasts to singing gospel hymns exclusively; at one point, WBAP received more than 100,000 requests for promotional photographs of the group, and The Chuck Wagon Gang continued to delight listeners five days a week for fifteen years; and

WHEREAS, The Chuck Wagon Gang made its first recordings on November 25-26, 1936, on a portable unit set up in a San Antonio hotel room; over the course of thirty-nine years with Columbia Records, the group recorded 408 selections and sold over forty million recordings as the label's second best-selling artist during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s; and

WHEREAS, after moving its headquarters to Knoxville, The Chuck Wagon Gang began recording exclusively in Nashville; the group stayed true to its roots, with just the quartet singing accompanied by a single guitar, and its recordings dominated both the gospel and country airwaves; and

WHEREAS, during the 1960s, The Chuck Wagon Gang appeared regularly on television, sang on the Grand Ole Opry and the Louisiana Hayride, and performed at Carnegie Hall, the Gator Bowl, and the Hollywood Bowl; and

WHEREAS, the group has received numerous awards, including being named the 1955 Disc Jockey Association's No. 1 Gospel Group in America and receiving the 1988, 1989, 1991, and 1992 TNN/*Music City News* Award for Country Gospel Group Of The Year and the 1989 Marvin Norcross Award, which is the highest honor given in the gospel music field; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, the International Bluegrass Music Association recognized The Chuck Wagon Gang's long career and enduring contributions to country gospel music when it awarded "Best Liner Notes for a Recording Project" and "Best Graphic Design for a Recorded Project" to *The Chuck Wagon Gang Complete Recordings: 1936-1955*; additionally, Dad Carter was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame as an individual in 1985, and The Chuck Wagon Gang as a whole in 1998; and

WHEREAS, The Chuck Wagon Gang is still recording and touring the nation to perform for a new generation of devoted fans in 2016; the group is presently led by owner, manager, and alto singer Shaye Smith, the granddaughter of The Gang's original alto, Anna Carter Gordon Davis, and Howard Gordon; Shaye is married to Andy Smith, and they make their home in Hertford, North Carolina, with their children, Ben, Noah, and Chloe; country music singer and Grand Ole Opry member Connie Smith has said about Shaye and the group: "It is very obvious Shaye is called to be there, and this group is called to do what they do; when you sit in the audience and listen to them, you sense the presence of God."; and

WHEREAS, the group's tenor singer, Stan Hill, still lives in his native Knoxville with his wife, Kathy, with whom he has three children and one granddaughter; Stan's voice and blend continue the high standard established by Dad Carter; and

WHEREAS, the group's guitarist and bass singer, Jeremy Stephens, makes his home in Nashville with his wife, Corrina; a longtime fan of The Gang, Jeremy is a student of the style of Howard Gordon, who played guitar for the group in the 1950s and 1960s, but when the group performs one of The Chuck Wagon Gang's older songs, Jeremy plays his flat-top Gibson; and

WHEREAS, soprano Melissa Kemper still resides in her native Groveton, Texas, with her husband, Jamie, and children Weston, Brandon, and Alysse; a member of The Chuck Wagon Gang from 2001 to 2006, Melissa rejoined the legendary quartet in 2015; and

WHEREAS, WSM on-air personality, Grand Ole Opry announcer, and Country Radio Hall Of Fame member Eddie Stubbs has stated: "No other gospel act has had closer ties to country music than The Chuck Wagon Gang. Perhaps that's because The Chuck Wagon Gang has always considered themselves to be a 'Country Gospel' group. For many decades, The Chuck Wagon Gang's music was played regularly on country radio stations, and their singles

were on juke boxes with the current country stars. With respect for their incredible heritage and honoring the songs that brought the group to initial prominence, the current Chuck Wagon Gang is by no means relegated to the past. Their continued knack for finding and recording new material with a positive message provides fans of all ages comfort and consolation for a brighter future."; and

WHEREAS, all of the songs on their latest album, *Meeting In Heaven*, were written by legendary country music singer, songwriter, and Grand Ole Opry member Marty Stuart, who has said of the group: "The music of The Chuck Wagon Gang has been a part of me since I was a child; their songs have served as a beacon of inspiration at every turn of life's way. The Chuck Wagon Gang's very presence lives on as a calming, source of peace, truth, and hope inside my heart. I treasure these songs, and I am so honored to have these most precious of God's Gentle People sing them. When I listen to the recordings of these works, it makes me feel like the original Chuck Wagon Gang's song says, 'mighty close to heaven.' Heaven only knows how many hearts have been touched by the music of The Chuck Wagon Gang."; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and commend The Chuck Wagon Gang on its illustrious eighty-year career in gospel music. We thank the group for serving as a beacon of inspiration for its legion of fans and making its loyal listeners feel "mighty close to heaven" and wish its members all the best in their future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.